100 mm
1.0
1.1
1.25
1.4
1.6
1.8
2.0
2.2
2.5
2.8
3.2
3.6
4.0
1.0 mm
1.5 mm
2.0 mm
ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890
A5

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 299 586 CS 211 556

AUTHOR Gale, Steven H.
TITLE Missouri Southern State College's High School/College English Teacher's Colloquium: A Model for a Cooperative Program.
PUB DATE 84
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *College Faculty; *College School Cooperation; *Conferences; English Instruction; Higher Education; High Schools; Interprofessional Relationship; School Community Relationship; *Secondary School Teachers
IDENTIFIERS College Special Events; *English Teachers; Missouri Southern State College

ABSTRACT

Offered as a model, this paper describes in detail the initiation, planning, and carrying out of the first and second annual high school/college English teachers' colloquiums begun by Missouri Southern State College in 1982 in order to improve interaction and communication between local high schools and the college. The paper advocates such colloquiums as an effective first step in enhancing cooperative endeavors between high school and college faculty, potentially leading to further activities such as field days and a visiting speakers program. The paper recommends that colloquiums should be kept as informal as possible, that the high school faculty be involved in the planning process as quickly as is practical, and that the program be allowed to evolve naturally from that point on. (SR)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

Missouri Southern State College's High School/College English Teacher's Colloquium: A Model for a Cooperative Program

by

Steven H. Gale

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY Steven H. Gale

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

ED299586

Located in Joplin, Missouri, Missouri Southern State College is a small four-year liberal arts college (enrollment approximately 3,500 in the fall of 1980, and about 5,100 in the fall of 1987) primarily serving a nine-county area in southwest Missouri. The college also draws a number of students from the nearby corners of Kansas, Oklahoma, and Arkansas. MSSC does not ever intend to be a research institution, but the faculty is proud of the national recognition of its success in fulfilling its goal by providing a solid liberal arts education for its students through good teaching.

In July, 1989 I moved from the University of Florida to Missouri Southern where I was to become the Head of the Department of English. One of my duties in the first year was to oversee the department's transition from a segment of the Language and Literature Division (which was responsible for teaching courses in English, foreign languages, journalism, and speech) to a separate, autonomous unit. Although the "A Nation at Risk," Carnegie Commission, and subsequent reports had not yet been published, I was concerned to find little interaction or communication between the department and the fifty high schools in the area from which our students normally are drawn. This situation was particularly disturbing since half of our eighty majors were B.S.Ed. students, most of whom had graduated from and would be seeking jobs in those very schools.

Ironically, the majority of English teachers in these high schools had also graduated from Missouri Southern. This did provide the one point of connection between the high schools and the college, though, for two of our instructors (who taught children's literature, composition for teachers, and our methods course) were highly esteemed by their former students. Furthermore, a line of communication was kept open as a result of our placing and observing student teachers in many of the local high schools.

The complications of being part of a division with several distinct components apparently had led to a lack of focus, and it had been difficult to coordinate the establishment of college/high school relationships across such a wide and diverse curriculum. Given these circumstances, I began exploring possibilities for initiating some sort of a cooperative program. Other departments on campus conducted projects such as the math and history field days. Since these programs had proven effective, the English Department started planning for an English Field Day for the 1981-82 academic year.

In July, 1981, however, I attended an Association of Departments of English Summer Seminar for departmental administrators at the University of California at Los Angeles. During a number of sessions there were several topics that were raised over and over in the general discussions, but there was one concern that stood out in my mind because, while everyone talked about it, no one seemed to be able to offer a practical approach to solving the problem. That problem was the need to establish meaningful interrelationships between college and high school English departments. No one had any actual proposals, but everybody concurred that this was

an area that merited special attention. Another concern was the lack of knowledge college English departments have about similar departments at other colleges and universities, though the seminar itself was obviously functioning to alleviate this condition. In addition, I was impressed by a program conducted by the California State University System that brings together the nineteen English department chairmen twice a year to discuss their common goals, needs, and procedures.

On the way home from Los Angeles I thought about the questions that had been explored, and by the time the airplane landed I had devised a plan for a high school/college English teachers conference that has developed into the central element in three separate but interrelated activities here at Missouri Southern which have greatly enhanced our relations with local high schools. Essentially, in creating the concept of the colloquium I combined the need for interacting with the high schools and the idea underlying the California State University System biannual meetings. I also decided that it would be better to pursue this project than to continue with the field day proposal. This turned out to be wise because it allowed us to establish a good relationship with the high school teachers first, providing us a base upon which to build, and from which the other two segments of our tripartite program have naturally evolved.

Our first colloquium was held on March 6, 1982. To prepare for this special conference we sent letters to the heads of all of the high school English departments whom we could identify, and to the principals in those cases where no names were available to us. Parenthetically,

one of the most important features that can and should evolve from a program such as this is the development of a list of high school English teachers and department chairs. The existence of this list has proven very valuable in connection with numerous subsequent events. In the letter we invited all members of the department to attend. We explained when and where the meeting would take place, indicated the topics tentatively set for discussion, and invited comments on the topics, including suggestions for additional or substitute topics. The topics tentatively chosen to be discussed were:

1) Ways that the English departments of area high schools and MSSC could better work with each other.
2) Aspects of English department curricula in high school and college.
3) Ways in which the college might better serve area high schools in preparing future teachers.
4) Ideas for a possible high school field day in English.
5) Possibilities for creating an English Department visiting speakers program for area high schools.
6) The credit-in-escrow program at MSSC.
7) Ways of improving the student teacher program at MSSC.

We also enclosed a map of the campus and an addressed registration card (no fee was to be charged, of course, but we provided a complimentary luncheon and needed to know how many to plan for).

Because my intention for the first conference was purely to demonstrate our interest to the high schools and to open the lines of communication and establish a sense of collegiality between the high school and college

teachers, the program purposely was kept fairly unstructured. This was potentially the largest problem that I had, for some of my own faculty felt uneasy at the thought of meeting all of the high school teachers without exhaustive and detailed preparation for the discussion sessions. I maintained that any time a group of teachers gets together, they find something to talk about, and the subject usually revolves around teaching. In order to promote a sense of conviviality and shared interests, and to avoid any sense of condescension or patronization, I insisted on preserving as informal an atmosphere as feasible. After their initial hesitation, my faculty accepted this approach, and I feel that not only was the cordial atmosphere that resulted largely responsible for the success of our first meeting, but also that it set the tone for the program as it has developed.

The conference took place at the student union on the college campus. Registration ran from 9:30 to 10:00 on that Saturday morning, and we provided coffee and donuts. Saturday morning was chosen because a poll of high school teachers determined that this was the time when most would be the most likely to be free. March came after the football and basketball seasons and well before preparations for the end of the school year. At registration participants were given pre-typed name tags and a folder containing the schedule for the day, a list of the participants, copies of our departmental major's B.A. and B.S.Ed. worksheets, pads of paper and pens embossed with the college's logo, the departmental brochure, information about the college's credit-in-escrow program, a list of departmental members who had agreed to be involved in a visiting speakers program, and a questionnaire regarding the conference events to be filled

out by the end of the day (more about these last two items later). We also had set up tables with college catalogs which were available for the taking, and with displays of the textbooks used in our composition classes and in our literature courses. We actively encouraged everyone to introduce themselves to others and to engage in conversation as soon as they had completed the simple registration process of picking up their folders.

Following the registration there was a general welcome on behalf of the department, and an explanation of the schedule. After the welcome we moved to separate rooms around the main conference hall for small group discussions. Two Missouri Southern faculty members were responsible for leading the forty-five minute discussions centering on the MSSC program in general and specifically explaining the department's curriculum. To help overcome the faculty's nervousness, the pairings were decided well before the conference so that there could be some minimal preparation by the discussion leaders prior to the event--arrangements regarding what topics they might emphasize in their particular session, for instance.

After a fifteen minute break, at which coffee, tea, and punch were served, there were another series of small group discussions, this time focusing on high school needs. Again two MSSC faculty led each discussion, but basically the purpose in these sessions was to listen to what the high school teachers wanted to tell us or to ask us.

From noon until 1:00 the complimentary luncheon was served, and once more conversation was encouraged, in part by seating MSSC faculty at each table.

At each discussion group during the morning meetings someone was elected to take notes. Between 1:00 and 1:45 all of the participants

met in the conference hall to hear reports from the individual groups. There was a final coffee break from 1:45 to 2:00, and then from 2:00 until 3:00 time was set aside for people to meet in small groups again to continue discussing anything that had especially interested them in the morning sessions. Interestingly, more than half of the participants stayed for this extra session, which ran longer than scheduled, and the topic that everyone chose (thus making one large group rather than several small groups) was the teaching of composition. Based on this response we determined that this would be the subject for the colloquium the next year.

In post-conference meetings the MSSC English Department faculty concluded that this first conference with the high school teachers was successful, and the questionnaires distributed at the conference confirmed this. We had asked: what topics would you like to see discussed at future conferences; would you be interested in co-chairing a discussion session, and if so, on what subject; did you find the book exhibit worthwhile; would you be interested in hearing a speaker during the luncheon, and if so, on what topic; would you change the conference format, and if so, how; how might we improve the conference; when is the best time for this kind of conference (month, day of the week, hours). The responses were extremely positive, and demonstrated a great deal of interest in making the conference an annual event. We learned what some of their goals and needs were, they learned about ours, programs were described, and there was a better understanding of how our curricula and techniques could be structured to fit one another. Most important, though, was the realization that an amiable relationship had been established that could lead to more significant things.

In addition to the seventeen MSSC faculty who attended the conference, thirty-two high school teachers representing sixteen high schools had participated, and six MSSC English majors had also taken part. The conference proved extremely valuable for the students, who had a chance to be involved in a discussion of their chosen profession with people who had been teaching for years, and it simultaneously permitted them to make contacts at schools where they would later apply for positions. The invitation of the school dean, the academic vice president, and the college president to speak at the welcome during the morning session stimulated some good will on campus, too.

The cost of conducting this first conference was greater than succeeding conferences have been, largely due to our providing the luncheon. Luckily, I was able to obtain a Danforth Association College Project Grant to fund the entire meeting, including the meal. The total cost was $406.07. This breaks down to $290.85 for food (lunches for forty-eight, plus coffee, donuts, juice, punch, and cookies for the registration and breaks), $24 for local travel to gather supplies and so forth, and $91.98 for all of the other expenses (typing and secretarial services, supplies, postage, and telephone). Another $5-$10 worth of materials was donated. The college president has been so impressed by the program that he paid for this year's lunches, and the other expenses came out of the departmental budget. If lunches are not provided in the future, we will simply invite participants to bring their own lunches or to utilize the campus cafeteria and snack bar.

Because I believe that a program such as this can suceed only if the faculty involved want it to succeed, I turned over to the department all responsibility for arrangements for any later conferences. In the

fall of 1982 our attention was engaged by the English Field Day and the Visiting Speakers Program, the second and third components of our tripartite program. The suggestions for the field day that were gathered during the teacher's conference were instrumental in our producing a quite successful event the next spring (approximately 400 high school students participated), and led to even closer ties with the high school teachers for we felt at ease in developing that program in conjunction with them. In 1983 the field day participation grew to approximately 450 high school students, and plans for the 1984 event are already well under way. Upon a high school teacher's request the Visiting Speakers Program makes available volunteers from the college's English Department to visit schools within a thirty mile radius to speak to English classes on areas of their expertise. This program has been utilized on the average about three times a semester.

By late spring 1983 the other programs were well established, there had been a number of inquiries from high school teachers about the possibility of our staging another conference, and interest within the department was still high, so one of the faculty took on the responsibility for arranging for our second annual conference. This time the colloquium was scheduled for Saturday, September 24 (the field day was held the next spring), to see whether a spring or a fall date was most advantageous. It appears that there is no significant difference, though local conditions may have an effect elsewhere.

The attendance for our second conference was slightly better than that for our first one, and there is some evidence that the numbers may increase next year as well, for word of mouth support by the high school teachers continues to be our most effective advertisement. Moreover,

I have made a practice of sending letters to the principals of those teachers who have attended to notify them by name of the individual's attendance, and to encourage them to promote attendance by giving some sort of credit or other recognition for attendance. Several principals have reacted very favorably to this.

There were some significant changes in our approach to the second conference. First, the faculty member involved is friendly with our computers, and this has allowed for better record keeping and an easier dissemination of information to the high school teachers because of better printing and addressing capabilities. Second, an effort was made to involve the high school teachers in each stage of the planning and execution of the project. A joint committee was established to determine the format and subject matter of the conference, and high school and college teachers co-chaired many of the discussion sessions. Third, instead of the open topic approach utilized for the first meeting, a specific subject was chosen around which the conference was structured. As indicated above, this topic was teaching the writing process. The discussion sessions were expanded from forty-five minutes to an hour, and most started with a demonstration and then were developed into discussion sessions. The subjects during the morning session included pre-writing and invention, the composition process, editing and revision, and marking and evaluation of student writing, and participants could be involved in any two of the groups. After lunch there was one hour, during which time participants could choose to attend one session. The afternoon topics included literature and writing, teaching literature through the use of student journals and informal papers, teaching grammar through writing,

and coordinating what is taught in high school and college writing courses so that students will know what to expect from each.

Plans for next year's colloquium are already well developed. Again the subject chosen was a natural outgrowth of the discussions at this year's conference: the teaching of literature. Other than this, we have found the approach employed so well suited to both high school and college teachers that we foresee no major changes. A congenial, yet excited, atmosphere has developed in which teachers at all levels are learning how to conduct their classes more effectively. The interaction stimulates interest, boosts morale, and promotes an understanding of the interrelationship of the high school and college programs that is conducive to the evolution of techniques and goals that are clearly becoming more unified than they were when very few teachers on either level were aware of what teachers on the other level were doing.

Finally, the high school/college English teachers colloquium has been so well received, and has already resulted in the implementation of new teaching techniques in the classroom as well as in cooperative interactions between high school and college teachers, that I can recommend the program with little or no change. The high school/college English teachers colloquium is an effective first step on the departmental level for enhancing cooperative endeavors between high school and college faculty. My only advice would be that the program be kept as informal as possible, that the high school faculty be involved in the planning process as quickly as is practical, and that the program be allowed to evolve naturally from that point on.